

WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA

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March 31, 1982

Alexander M. Haig, Jr.
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

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U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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Declassify: ☐ In Part ☐ In Full

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date ☐ Declassify on ☐ Reason ☐

Dear Secretary Haig:

We wish to communicate to you our profound concern over the massive arrests in Argentina on March 30. Thousands of labor leaders and workers were arrested along with political leaders and human rights activists during the labor demonstrations in Buenos Aires and Mendoza. We have received preliminary reports of several deaths and critically wounded people in Mendoza, and of beatings and unrestrained brutality by the security forces which turned a peaceful protest for jobs and bread into an act of repression and shame for the Argentine government. These extreme actions were not carried out against marxists or subversives, but against hungry workers and their supporters, demanding only that their voices be heard. Under these circumstances, the actions of the military are totally unjustified.

We are particularly concerned over the arrest of Leonardo Perez Esquivel, son of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Adolfo Perez Esquivel. While the military initially denied his detention, they have recently stated that he is being held incommunicado, under the disposition of the police chief.

We, the undersigned, believe that it is time for the United States to communicate clearly to General Galtieri and to the present Argentine government that displays of excessive force and a return to the brutality of the past will seriously affect relations with the U.S., and that public protests of this type must be met with understanding and dialogue, not with tear gas, whips and clubs.

Sincerely,

Joseph T. Eldridge
Washington Office on Latin
America

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